

FSS NEWSLETTER

City & County of Honolulu • Department of Community Services • Section 8 Rental Assistance Branch •
Family Self-Sufficiency Program
<http://www.honolulu.gov/dcs/rentalassistance.htm>

2020
Volume 8

Letter of Appreciation



*The secret to
getting ahead is
getting started.*
~Mark Twain

Family Self-Sufficiency

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I had come to the United States in 2009 on a fiancée visa. Born and raised in Africa, I worked as a Bilingual Executive Assistant. My would-be husband was from the US. He talked about us starting a family and I wanted that with him. He said if I didn't like living in the US we would move together somewhere else. I figured I was a capable person and could get work wherever we went so I moved with him to Hilo for his work. The following month I was pregnant.

In his own environment he became a different person but he said things would get better and I believed he meant it. We'd be together and he'd take care of us. Later that year we moved to Florida for his work. And I gave birth to my baby.

Becoming a new mother and finding similar employment became challenging especially with a husband who was unwilling to help with childcare. I decided to train as a Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) hoping to have a flexible work schedule that could accommodate my husband. Eventually my employment hours required me to have some form of childcare but my income barely covered the childcare expenses. My husband's endless abuse, control, and refusal to help with childcare or childcare expenses made it obvious that sooner or later, I'd need to become financially independent and sustainable. So I worked as I much as I could and decided to pursue skilled education to improve earnings down the road.

In January 2011, I expressed my desire to attend college to my husband which he adamantly opposed. I defied his opinion and enrolled in Palm Beach State College in Florida in the Pre-Pharmacy Program. That decision escalated our already troubled marriage. Facing his backlash and discouraging tactics, I took college courses in the evenings and weekends when I could afford the childcare.

The more opposed he was, the more determined and courageous I became. Even back then I believed skilled education to be the only gateway out of, not only the troubled and abusive relationship my son and I were in, but also a way out of my poverty.

In Spring 2012, my husband accepted a job offer on Oahu. After our family resettled, I resumed my education at Kapiolani Community College completing my pre-pharmacy courses. The following year I was accepted for fall entry into the UH Hilo College of Pharmacy with a 4.0 GPA. That same month I saw the final days of our marriage. Infuriated, my husband filed for divorce and falsely obtained a TRO that changed the course of my life forever. Although he later failed to substantiate his (TRO) claims in court, the damage was done.

For the next few weeks I lived in my car. I had no real friends or family, and nowhere to go. Up until then, I was entirely dependent on him. I was unable to contact my son or find out anything about him. I was an emotional mess. The people at KCC noticed. They helped me apply for financial assistance and food stamps and referred me to Domestic Violence Action Center. I used my student aid funds to eventually rent an apartment.

Our divorce process took over two years and I ended up turning down admission to the Pharmacy program in Hilo. Looking back, I realized my ex-husband changed the perception I had of myself and made me think I was not worthy. I was to blame. Everything I did was not to make him mad and if he was mad, it was my fault and if I were a different person he wouldn't be this way.

In Spring 2014, a friend had encouraged me to apply for Section 8. I did and was selected. The lady I had met with at my initial Section 8 meeting was so compassionate. She listened to my story and said that things have been bad but this (assistance) could make it better, this could be the start of something better. From that point I began to see myself differently. I was emotionally damaged when I started the Section 8 process but their kindness helped me start to heal and recover.

I had a hard time finding a unit. I didn't have credit, a steady job, or rental history and landlords didn't want to rent to Section 8. My current landlord was one of those people. She hadn't rented with Section 8 before and wasn't interested. I begged and begged and promised to take care of her unit and her property. She agreed to take a chance. I've kept my promise and five years later I still live here. My landlord has become my strongest supporter.

In May 2020, I graduated with honors from UH Manoa with two Bachelor of Science degrees: Nursing (BSN) and Molecular Biosciences and Biotechnology (MBB) as well as a minor in Public Health. I was also awarded the lone prestigious Daisy Award for Excellence in Nursing in my cohort. I am very proud of my achievements and thankful for Section 8. In January 2021 I'll start my new job as a Registered Nurse.

I have chosen to tell my story here because I hope someone will relate to these painful events and hopefully seize the lifeline that is this program to regain control of their life. To anyone reading this and in a similar position or even far worse one, I hope you can draw inspiration from my story and write your own. While we sometimes carefully plan events in our lives, we don't always have the luxury to do so. However, when given a second or even any chance to redo or attempt something better, we must seize it.

I wish to seize this opportunity to also express my sincere and warm gratitude to the men and women who worked and continue to work behind the scenes for people like myself to have a chance to rebuild our lives. Till today, I still hear the kind words of the employees who expressed their warm support and encouragement to me. Still recovering from the domestic abuse, I was ashamed of what had happened and still blamed myself for it and consequently thought everyone saw me like my abuser did. As I went through the different stages of the prequalification process, hearing the interviewers remind me that I will be fine was always relieving. But most importantly, it made me feel like all was not lost. Their encouraging words continue to guide me through the psychologically, emotionally, and academically demanding programs I went through being a single mother. Not having to worry about rent was my greatest peace of mind. The few days of living in my car continue to haunt me and the FSS program in which I am in right now, offers me the support I need to transition financially.

My hope is that this program continues to be a bridge between poverty and sustainability for families and that those who see the value in the assistance will use it wisely and take their lives to the next level like I have.

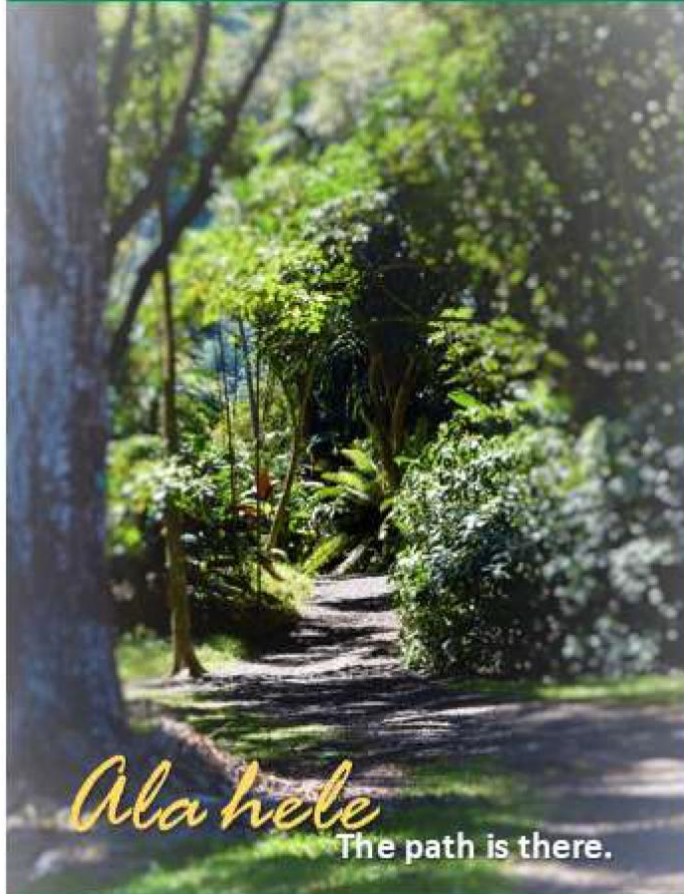
Yours Truly



AMERICAN JOB CENTER HAWAII

*Let us help you find the pathway to
your next job.*

(see reverse side for services)



Ala hele

The path is there.

City Department of Community Services
WorkHawaii Division



Mission Statement:
"We are a community partner creating
opportunities to improve the quality of
life for the people of O'ahu."



A proud partner of the **American Job Center** network

Services

Work with Employment Counselors to:

- Build your resume and learn effective job interviewing skills;
- Identify a new career pathway;
- Learn effective ways to search for a job and keep that job;
- Learn about education and training opportunities that will assist you in developing new job skills;
- Learn about the resources that will provide tuition assistance for short-term training (i.e. Commercial Driver's License, Certified Nursing Assistant);
- Improve your reading and math skills; and
- Receive a high school equivalency credential (i.e. GED).

American Job Center Hawaii

1505 Dillingham Blvd., Suite 110

(808) 768-5701

Email: ajch@honolulu.gov

STAR★EVENTS
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VIRTUAL
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Virtual Career Expos

9am - 1pm HST +10 am - 2 pm HST

Jan 27 - 28, 2021

May 26 - 27, 2021

Oct 27 - 28, 2021

<https://hawaiicareerexpo.com/>



Honolulu Community Action Program, Inc.
Providing Opportunities and Inspiration since 1965

Nā Lima Hana "For the Working Hand" Employment Core Services Program

Nā Lima Hana "for the working hand" Employment Core Services Program provides job readiness training, personalized one-one-one employment counseling services, tuition assistance for vocational school, and job placement to unemployed and underemployed individuals throughout the island of O'ahu.

Intake Locations

Intake for the program is conducted at each of HCAP's five District Service Centers, located throughout the island of Oahu.

Central District Service Center: 488-6834

Kalihi-Palama District Service Center: 847-0804

Leahi District Service Center: 732-7755

Leeward District Service Center: 696-4261

Windward District Service Center: 239-5754

OUR SERVICES



Employment Preparation

- Intake, assessment & individual service plan
- Employment preparation/job development
- Vocational/GED tuition assistance
- Job placement
- Job support
- Job maintenance and retention



Tuition Assistance for Vocational School

Participants can receive tuition assistance for a range of vocational courses, including automotive technology, nurse aid training, pharmacy technician training, and more. ECS offers tuition assistance at the following institutions:

- Honolulu Community College
- Kapi'olani Community College
- Leeward Community College
- Windward Community College
- Professional Healthcare Educators
- Caregiver Training School
- And more!



Visit Us At: www.hcapweb.org

Phone: 808-521-4531

Email: NaLimaHana@hcapweb.org

FREE Tax Prep through VITA

Thanks to certified volunteers working across the State of Hawaii, you can have your federal and state tax returns prepared for **FREE**. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (**VITA**) sites generally become available at the end of January and run through April. Sites accept clients by appointment only.

Please check their website - www.hawaiiitaxhelp.org for more information, including tax site locations.